

Glossary: Muslim worldview traditions

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[In-depth subject knowledge essay](#)

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Adhan

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Azaan, Athan

The call to prayer recited by a muezzin to announce the time for the obligatory daily prayers:

Allahu Akbar (four times) – God is most great.

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa- Allah (once) – I witness that there is no god except God.

Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasula- Allah (once) – I witness that Muhammad (pbuh) is the messenger of God.

Hayya ala-s-salah (twice) – Come to prayer.

Hayya ala-l-falah (twice) – Come to salvation.

Allalhu Akbar(twice) – God is most great.

La ilaha-illa-Allah (once) – There is no god except God.

Akhirah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Akhirat

DEFINITION: The belief in life after death. A core belief of most Muslims is that life on earth is a test, and Allah will decide whether people go to Jannah (Jannah) on the day of judgement.

Allah

The name for God in the Arabic language and used in preference to the word God because this Arabic term is singular, has no plural, and is not associated with

masculine or feminine characteristics. Muslims believe that Allah is the only God and is the Creator of all.

According to tradition there are 99 'beautiful names' of Allah, such as 'the All Merciful' (ar-Rahman) and 'the Creator' (al-Khaliq).

Eid-ul-Adha

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Eid al Adha, Id ul Adha, Eid al Adha, Id ul Azha

DEFINITION: Commemorating the Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son Isma'il (Ishmael) for Allah. Also known as Id ul-Kabir (the Greater Id), 'Big Eid' and Qurban Bayram (Turkish – feast of sacrifice). This festival takes place during Hajj but is celebrated by all whether or not they are taking part in Hajj.

Eid-ul-Fitr

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Eid al Fitr, Id ul Fitr, Eid e Fitr

DEFINITION: Celebration of breaking the fast on the day after Ramadan ends, which is also the first day of Shawal, the tenth Islamic month. Also known as Eid-ul-Saghir – the Lesser Eid – 'Little Eid' – and Sheker Bayram (Turkish) – sugar feast.

Five pillars

Practices that form the foundation of life for most Muslims. These are:

Shahadah: The Muslim declaration of faith, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger."

Salah: The name for compulsory daily prayer for Muslims. Muslims try to pray five times a day (for some Muslims these five prayers can be combined and done three times) to connect with Allah and express their devotion.

Zakah: The compulsory giving of charity each year. This is often given during the month of Ramadan.

Sawm: Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. This is the third of the five pillars. Ramadan usually lasts between 29-30 days.

Hajj: A pilgrimage to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia that Muslims try to do once in their lifetime. Hajj takes place over a 10-day period in the month of Dhul Hijjah.

These are followed by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Shi'a Muslims also have extra acts that they follow.

Five roots of Usal ad-Din

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Usul al Din, Usool e Deen

These are the central articles of faith for Shi'a Muslims (also see six articles for Sunni Muslims). Consisting of:

- Tawhid: The concept of the oneness of Allah (God) and that nothing is equal to Allah.
- Day of Judgement: When Allah will judge people on how they have lived. In the afterlife Muslims believe they will be sent to Hell or Paradise.
- Prophets should be respected: This especially refers to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the seal of the prophets, meaning he was the last prophet. There are 25 prophets listed in the Qur'an for example, Isa (Jesus), Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).
- Authority of the imams: Twelve imams, in Shi'a Islam this is the name given to the twelve descendants of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).
- Day of resurrection: In the afterlife Muslims believe they will be resurrected and judged by Allah and then sent to Hell or Paradise.

Hadith

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Hadeeth

The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that are remembered by people who were his close friends and family. These are a major source of Islamic law.

Some Hadith are referred to as Hadith Qudsi ('sacred Hadith') because Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was given to them by Allah.

Hajj

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Haj

DEFINITION: A pilgrimage to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia that Muslims try to do once in their lifetime. Hajj takes place over a 10-day period in the month of Dhul Hijjah. This is the last of the five pillars.

Hajjah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Haaji, Haajjah

DEFINITION: A Muslim male who has completed Hajj is called Hajji, and a female, Hajjah.

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Halal

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Halaal

Any action or thing which is allowed or lawful within Islamic law. That which is not allowed or unlawful within Islamic law is called 'Haram'. Most commonly people think about this in terms of food, but it is much wider than this.

In areas where there are many Muslim people living, shops and supermarkets stock halal food. This is food, especially meat, that is allowed for Muslims because it conforms to the animal slaughter requirements of the Qur'an and the Muslim legal code.

Hijab

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Hejab

DEFINITION: This usually refers to the headscarf worn by some Muslim women, as a symbol of faith, and to cover her hair in the company of all men, apart from her husband and close family members.

Ibadah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Ibaadah

DEFINITION: Ibadah is the word for worship in Arabic. This means any action that a person performs with the intention of obeying Allah.

Iftar

DEFINITION: A meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan to break the fast. Put literally, 'break-fast.'. This meal is held at the end of the day, when the sun has gone down. Families and friends will get together for iftar to break their fast, often starting with water and dates. The beginning of the fasting day is also marked by a meal, suhoor.

Ihram

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Ehram

DEFINITION: The simple clothes worn by pilgrims at Hajj. For women this is their normal clothing, but with their hands and faces uncovered. For men this is two white pieces of cloth.

Imam

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Imaam

DEFINITION: The title 'imam' is used differently in Sunni and Shi'a communities; for Sunni Muslims it is generally the imam who leads the community, especially in prayer and worship, but for Shi'a Muslims, the Imams are those individuals who were chosen by God to be perfect examples of how to live a Muslim life.

Jihad

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Jihaad

The personal struggle against evil and the effort needed to follow Allah. It can also refer to the collective defence of the Muslim community, using force only as a last resort, and only when approved by a lawful authority.

There are two types of Jihad:

Greater Jihad: Striving to do good in life and to improve spiritually.

Lesser Jihad: A war fought in self-defence which has been approved by a religious leader, according to a strict set of rules.

Ka'bah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Kaaba, Ka ba, Kaba, Kaabah

DEFINITION: The Ka'bah is found at the centre of Makkah and is the most sacred site in Islam. It is considered sacred, as according to Islamic tradition, it was built by the Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail, as a place dedicated solely to worshipping the one God, Allah. It is a black cube shaped building.

Khalifah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Khalifa, Caliph

DEFINITION: Adam is known as Allah's Khalifa in the Qur'an. A Khalifa is both a steward or custodian, and a successor. Muslims believe humans are the Khalifa of Allah on the earth. This involves showing care for the earth, the environment, and all life forms.

Madrasah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Madrasa, Madrasah, Madressa

DEFINITION: A madrassah is the place where Muslims, especially children, learn Arabic, learn to read and study the Qur'an.

Makkah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Mecca

DEFINITION: The sacred city of Islam and direction of prayer for Muslims. It is located in Saudi Arabia.

Medina

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Madinah

DEFINITION: The city established by Muhammad (pbuh) as the first Muslim community, where the mosque of the prophet houses his tomb, along with the tombs of other key figures in Islam. It is located in Saudi Arabia.

Mihrab

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Mehrab

DEFINITION: The niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Makkah.

Minaret

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Manara

DEFINITION: The tower attached to the mosque used for the purpose of calling people to prayer. The call to prayer is the Adhan.

Minbar

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Mimbar

DEFINITION: A piece of furniture in the mosque, where the Imam stands to deliver his talk, particularly at Friday communal prayers known as Jummah prayers. It is usually in the form of a set of stairs.

Mosque

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Masjid, Musjid

A place where Muslims go to pray, worship, and learn about Allah, and where other community functions are sometimes performed, such as preparing bodies for burial.

The word for mosque in Arabic is masjid, place of prostration. In reality, Muslims can pray in many other places, for example: at home, at work, whilst travelling. A 'mosque' is, in effect, any place a Muslim can prostrate to pray. There are many different types of buildings that are mosques, from converted houses to purpose-built mosques.

Muezzin

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Mu adh-dhin, Moazzin, Mu'adhin

The person who recites the call to prayer, the Adhan. Traditionally this would be done from the top of a minaret – the tower attached to a traditional mosque.

According to tradition, the first muezzin was a freed slave called Bilal.

Muslim

DEFINITION: A person who follows the religion of Islam, someone who submits to the will of Allah.

Prophet

DEFINITION: Muslims believe prophets are messengers sent from Allah. The final prophet, known as the 'seal of the prophets', was Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Many who are prophets in Islam are also significant figures for Christians and Jews, e.g. Isa (Jesus), Musa (Moses), Ibrahim (Abraham), Dawud (David) and Adam.

Prophet Muhammad

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Mohammed, Mohammad, Mohamed, Muhammed

DEFINITION: The last prophet in Islam who received messages from Allah. "Pbuh" means "peace be upon him". Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is referred to as the seal of the prophets.

Qiblah wall

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Qibla, Qiblah

DEFINITION: The wall in the mosque that faces Makkah, the direction that Muslims pray.

Qur'an

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Quran, Koran, Quraan

DEFINITION: The holy book of Islam, believed to be the word of Allah. The literal meaning is 'that which is read or recited'.

The whole book is believed by Muslims to have been revealed on Mount Hira to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by Angel Jibrial, directly from Allah.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is Allah's final revelation to humankind. It consists of 114 Surah (divisions or 'chapters').

Ramadan

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Ramadhan, Ramazan

DEFINITION: A holy month in the Muslim calendar when those who can fast (sawm) do so from sunrise to sunset.

The month of Ramadan begins and ends with the appearance of the crescent moon.

Salah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Salah, Salat, Salaah, prayer

DEFINITION: The name for compulsory daily prayer for Muslims. Muslims try to pray five times a day to connect with Allah and express their devotion. Shi'a Muslims often combine two prayers together, which means they say the same prayers but at three distinct prayer times. Salah – prayer is the second of the five pillars of Islam.

The times of salah for Sunni Muslims are:

Fajr (Salat-ul-Fajr): Dawn until just before sunrise;

Zuhr / Duhr (Salat-ul-Zuhr/Duhr): After midday until afternoon;

Asr (Salat-ul-Asr): Mid-afternoon until a short while before sunset;

Maghrib (Salat-ul-Maghrib): Just after sunset until daylight ends;

Isha (Salat-ul-Isha): Evening, from just over an hour after sunset until midnight.

A prayer consists of takbir, qiyyam, rukhu, sajdah and taslim, which are the names of the different positions in the prayer, each having their own symbolism.

The weekly communal salah is known as Jummah (Jumu'ah) and is performed just after midday on Fridays in the Masjid (mosque – place of prostration).

Sawm

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Saum, Siyam

DEFINITION: Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. This is the third of the five pillars. Ramadan usually lasts between 29-30 days.

Shahadah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Shahada, Sahadah

DEFINITION: The Muslim declaration of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”. This is the first of the five pillars of Islam for Sunni Muslims.

Shariah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Sharia, Shariah, Shari a, Shari ah

DEFINITION: This is the code of laws that lay out how Muslims should live. The word shariah means straight path. Sharia law is based on the Qur’an, Hadith and the Sunnah. Shariah law can guide a Muslim throughout their whole life. Muslim scholars ensure that the insight from the sacred texts is applied to the situations of life allowing Muslims to obey Allah.

Shi’a

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Shia, Shiah

DEFINITION: There are different traditions in Islam. Not all Muslims practice their faith in exactly the same way. Shi’a Muslims are the second largest Muslim group in the UK and worldwide.

The reason that there is a split in the two traditions or branches is a divergence over who was the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Shi’a Muslims believe in the Imamah – that Muhammad’s cousin Ali (and Ali’s descendants) succeeded him as leader.

Six articles

These are the central articles of faith for Sunni Muslims (also see Five roots of Usal ad-Din for Shi’a Muslims). Consisting of:

Tawhid: The concept of the oneness of Allah (God) and that nothing is equal to Allah.

Angels: These were Allah’s first creation and messages to the prophets were relayed by angels. Angels also tell Allah how humans are behaving.

Holy books should be respected: Especially the Qur'an as it is the word of Allah that was shared as a direct revelation.

Prophets should be respected: This especially refers to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the seal of the prophets, meaning he was the last prophet. There are 25 prophets listed in the Qur'an for example, Isa (Jesus), Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).

Day of Judgement: When Allah will judge people on how they have lived. In the afterlife, Muslims believe they will be sent to Hell or Paradise

Al-Qadr: There is a divine plan. Allah knows or will decide all that is going to happen.

Sufi

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Soofi

DEFINITION: A way of practising Islam that emphasises the mystical inward search for Allah. It is a path of spiritual devotion which often includes meditation, asceticism and dancing.

Sunnah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Sunna

DEFINITION: The way Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived his life. This includes how he behaved, dressed and his day to day living practices. They are considered to be a model of Muslim behaviour. One example of this is the 7 steps of performing Wudu (ritual ablutions before prayer) and another example is, according to sunnah, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had a beard and therefore, many Muslim men choose to have a beard too.

Sunni

DEFINITION: There are different traditions in Islam. Not all Muslims practice their faith in exactly the same way. Sunni Muslims are the largest Muslim group in the UK and worldwide.

The reason that there is a split in the two traditions or branches, is a divergence over who was the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Sunni Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not appoint a successor to follow him as leader of the Muslims, and that the Qur'an and the sayings (hadith) of the Prophet form the basis of Islamic law. The first Sunni successors of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

Surah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Sura

DEFINITION: Divisions or 'chapters' of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is divided into 114 surah. Interestingly, there is a surah titled Maryam, named after the mother of Isa (Jesus).

Tawaf

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Tawaaf

DEFINITION: As part of Hajj, pilgrims walk around the Ka'bah seven times in an anti-clockwise direction.

Tawhid

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Tawheed, Tauhid

The concept of the oneness of Allah (God) and that nothing is equal to Allah.

Tawhid is the most fundamental belief in Islam; to say that any other being is Allah (or even like Allah) is to commit shirk (an unforgivable error).

The Jamarats

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Jamarat, Rami al Jamarat

Pilgrims throw small pebbles at the Jamarats, which are three stone walls that used to be pillars. As they do this, they remember the story of Ibrahim being tempted by the devil not to follow Allah's will. In the story, Prophet Ibrahim threw stones at the devil and continued to try to follow the will of Allah.

This part of Hajj happens on the same day as the festival of Eid-ul-Adha.

Ummah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Ummat

DEFINITION: The worldwide Muslim community, regardless of ethnicity, culture or nationality. This is a diverse group, but it is united by the guidance of the Qur'an.

Wudu

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Wudhu, Wuzu

DEFINITION: The ritual and pattern of washing done before prayers, whether praying in the home, the mosque or elsewhere. Wudu cleans the hands, mouth, nostrils, arms, head and feet.

Zakah

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Zakaat, Zakat

DEFINITION: The compulsory giving of charity each year. This is often given during the month of Ramadan. This is the 4th of the five pillars.

The literal translation is 'that which purifies'. Zakat is calculated at 2.5% of total wealth. It can be donated to support the local community, support the mosque, to help people overseas and in those in need in this country and in others.

Zam-Zam water

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS: Zamzam

DEFINITION: Water that Muslims believe comes from a well that first spouted when Hagar was desperately seeking water for her baby Isma'il. During Hajj, pilgrims drink Zam-Zam water and often bring some of it home for their family and friends.